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"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM
YEAR TO YEAR."

All the Year Round

CONDUCTED BY

CHARLES DICKENS.

PART 62.

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A Weekly Journal

CONDUCTED BY

CHARLES DICKENS.

No. 266.—THIRD SERIES. SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 1894. PRICE TWOPENCE.

MARRIED TO ORDER.

A ROMANCE OF MODERN DAYS.

By ESME STUART.

Author of "Joan Vellacot," "A Woman of Forty," "Kestell of Greystone," etc., etc.

CHAPTER V.

It was a lovely summer's evening. A delicious stillness surrounded the Palace, and the silence was broken only by the music of the Rothery, flowing between deep banks down the glen.

All the mankind were far away except one, who was pacing slowly up and down his private sitting-room, situated in the west wing of the Palace. In their part of the house the servants talked in subdued voices as if afraid of being overheard, a very unusual proceeding on their part. In her turret chamber Penelope Winskell sat in a great carved oak chair, leaning her beautiful head upon her hands, and looking sadly out upon the deepening shadows of the glen.

She was dressed in black, and no white fichu relieved the gloom of her attire, but in contrast to the black dress her brilliant complexion was now even more noticeable than formerly.

She was deep in thought, and strangely enough, her thoughts, instead of lingering round her dead mother, had retraced the path back to the time when Philip Gillbanks had been an unbidden guest at the Palace. Then Penelope had treated him coldly, but now she would have liked to see him again. He was a breath from the outer world of which she knew so little, and the admiration which she had seen in his face had lingered almost unconsciously in her memory. Up to that time the

girl had lived a life of thought, but since then, quite in spite of herself, nature had taken its own way, and the spirit of romance had crept unbidden in. Her mother's sudden death had revealed to her the depth of a loneliness which she had not hitherto felt, and which she had never expected to realise. She was now alone, intensely alone except for her uncle. He had educated her, he had taught her to think; and, now she had learnt this, she had nothing round which to centre her thoughts. Sooner or later the wish to love, and to be loved, comes to all women who deserve the title, and Penzie Winskell had, as it were, suddenly stretched out her hands towards the unknown world, craving to know the secret of truest life. She did not explain it to herself in this way, but she knew now that she was lonely. Philip Gillbanks was the only man who had by his admiration revealed to her that she was beautiful, and that she possessed power over men. This was the reason why her thoughts at this moment went back to him.

Her father and her brother seemed to be quite outside the circle of her real life. She could not help despising them for being content to aspire to nothing beyond the mere rude life and emotions of farmers; moreover, she despised them for striving to so little purpose. Penelope knew from her uncle and from her own observation, that slowly but surely the Winskell family were sinking deeper and deeper into difficulties. She knew, too, that the King of Rothery and the heir to the title despised her for being a weak woman, fit only to sit at home with the fastidious uncle, and considered them as merely useless appendages of the King's family. What good did their learning do? Did it free any

single acre from its burden of mortgage? Did it bring in a single gold piece?

Penelope was a strange mixture of pride and strong self-will, of passionate affection and selfishness. She could love and she could hate, but in youth there is a coldness often joined to love which sorrow's rude touch alone appears to cure. The young feel strong, and yet have no field wide enough upon which to exercise that strength; and so complex is every character, that it is in vain to try to classify them.

The Princess had grown up in this wild if beautiful solitude with two dominant ideas: these being that at any cost the house of Rothery must be saved from downfall, and that her uncle was the only person capable of accomplishing this redemption.

Often in her day-dreams she had seen the ancient glories of the Kings of Rothery return in full splendour. She had seen the greatest in the land soliciting her hand, and promising her the fame that was due to her ancient lineage. At such times Penelope had walked with a statelier step down the long, dreary passages of the old and dilapidated Palace, feeling that she was indeed a Princess; but again she had become conscious of the boorish ways of her father and of her brother, and suddenly her ideal had fallen. Would Dukes and Earls come and woo this lonely Princess, whose Palace so sadly stood in need of repair, and whose father, the King, took delight in the commonest manual labour, and drank as hard and swore as lustily as the roughest farmer in the dales?

At such times of reflection, Penelope sat in her turret chamber and listened to the music of the Rothery with feelings of extreme dejection. Then suddenly she would start up and inwardly rage because she was merely a girl, and, therefore, utterly powerless.

"There is but one way in which I can help, and that is by marrying some one rich and great who, because of his love for me, will care about the honour of our house, as much as I do myself."

At this point in her reflections, Penelope would walk down to the Duke's room, which was full of books and strange tomes, and she would come and sit by him on a low footstool. His presence always restored her injured feelings of pride and self-respect. If only he had been her father, the house of Rothery would have had no fall, and she knew that she would

now be mixing with her equals, instead of being merely a penniless Princess, whose mother could not understand her, and whose father and brother despised her for being born a woman.

This evening Penelope had been going through one of these sad moods. Her mother's funeral was over, and the girl now understood how little sympathy she had ever received from her, and how little comfort the Queen had found in her only daughter.

But this thought did not bring repentance. Hers was a strong nature that scorned repentance, yet she now thought more gently of the long-suffering woman, who had found so little pleasure in her life, and who could not understand the weariness of existence so often experienced by her clever daughter.

Penzie's cleverness did not consist in many accomplishments. She sang because she loved singing, but no one had trained her rich contralto voice. When all was soft and beautiful, Penelope, who had always been brought up hand in hand with nature as it were, could laugh and say sharp things to her brother. When the storms of winter burst over the lonely glen and shook the old gables of the house, then Penelope realised that she was a weak woman, and passion raged within her heart as did the elements among the stubborn trees. Without being able to express it to herself, the girl felt that she was a woman who could make a name for herself, for she knew she could crush her own feelings in order to satisfy her ambition.

To-day for a whole hour, whilst the sun set beneath the rounded outline of the trees, Penelope sat with her head on her hands beside the open window. The soft air blew in and fanned her beautiful cheek unheeded. The rooks flew across the glen on their way to their roosting-place, and the chorus of small birds was gradually hushed. The Rothery alone, singing its unending song, bounded from boulder to boulder, or ran swiftly in deeper beds, yet going ever onward to the sea, restlessly seeking a larger sphere, unknowing that what it sought would destroy its own identity.

When the darkness deepened Penelope rose slowly and stood by the window. She did not know how beautiful she was, for even Philip's admiration had been somewhat veiled, but she knew that she was capable of great things, and that she had the power to

accomplish them. She wanted the chance only, and then. . . !

"My uncle will help me," she said aloud, "he can do everything. He is a true Winskell and so am I, only I am a woman."

She opened the door, and, for the first time in her life, she felt a fear of the gloomy winding stairs. Now that her mother was dead she was alone in the turret. A little shudder passed over her, and then she laughed.

"How ludicrous," she said aloud; "as if mother would want to come back to her dreary life! She did not care as much about the Winskells as I do, nor did she appreciate the ghost of my great-aunt."

Penelope had never feared the family ghost. She even had a sympathy with the story of the proud Princess who still watched over the affairs of the Winskells, but she did not wish to meet her mother's ghost. Her quiet gaze, out of which love had died for want of sustenance, would have frightened her.

In a few minutes, however, Penelope, with an effort of which she was proud, shook off her fears and walked very firmly and slowly down the stairs; and then crossed the large hall, in which no lamp was yet lighted. A large dog, sleeping on the mat, heard her footfall and stretched itself cringing towards her as if it feared she would not notice it. But to-day Penelope stooped and pressed her hand firmly over his head as she said:

"Nero! Why are you here, I wonder?"

Instead of barking the dog set up a dismal howl which annoyed the Princess, and she impatiently pushed the dog aside.

"Be quiet, Nero. Isn't this house sad enough without that howl? The family still exists, even though the old prophecy said the doom would come when the Palace should be propped with bands of iron. Hush, Nero; as long as I live there shall be no iron bands."

Then she walked on, the dog following her sadly, as if its duty was to guard her in this solitary house.

After crossing the hall Penzie entered a long passage, the same which Philip Gillbanks had traversed, and, as the girl walked on, the thought of him again recurred to her.

He was tall, and strong, and good-looking, but he knew nothing of the old feeling which a true Rothery must possess. How could he have it? He was a tradesman's son.

"No," she thought, "no, I will never marry a 'nouveau riche,' never. A woman can only love her equal; but I wonder why I think of that stranger, for most likely I shall never see him again."

When she reached the end of the passage she paused before a door; a streak of light came from beneath it and straggled across the passage floor.

Penzie Winskell knocked softly, and the Duke's voice answered:

"Come in."

The room was dark, being panelled with oak. The windows looked westward, and reached low down with deep window-sills, which made charming seats for the Princess. As a girl she had spent her happiest hours in this room, being taught by her uncle all kinds of knowledge, much of which, however, forms no part of a modern young lady's education.

This evening the Duke sat in an old deep-seated arm-chair covered with leather, much worn, but which still stood the test of time, having been good when first made. On a low oak table near stood a lamp, and he leaned a little sideways in order to let the light fall on his book. In the centre of the room, and in the near corner, the fading daylight still held sway, and as Penelope approached her uncle she appeared to him to be a strange visitant, so unusual was the blending of the natural and artificial light which fell upon her. The Duke placed a marker in his book and slowly closed it, whilst Penzie seated herself on the low sill. The Duke looked at her, full of contradictory feelings. He loved her dearly because he had moulded her; he had taught her, he had been a true father to her in many ways, but he had not been able to give her what he did not possess, and he forgot that similar seed sown in different soils springs up in various ways. He had not taken into account her woman's nature, or he had miscalculated the effect it would have upon his teaching.

"Well, Princess, so you want company?"

"Yes," said Penelope, clasping her white, shapely hands over her head, where the tiny curls let loose from an antique comb turned many ways like vine tendrils.

"I have been sitting upstairs and thinking—thinking, till I felt I must come and talk to you, uncle. What are you reading? I don't know why I am so restless. I want—I want—oh! I don't know what I want."

"How old are you, Princess? I forget."

"I was twenty nearly a year ago. You know my birthday is on St. John's Day, and that will be in a week. Don't you remember, uncle, you promised that I should some day see the world, and that I should live to fulfil my destiny? What did you mean?"

The Duke smiled. His smooth lips, so well shaped to express sarcasm, also expressed obstinate determination.

"You think the time has come?"

"Yes, I want to do something for poor Rothery. You know I am brave, and that I am ready and willing to do as you tell me."

The Duke rose and slowly paced up and down the room with his head sunk on his chest, as if he were trying to settle some difficult question with himself.

"Penzie, you are not a child, you have always shown sense and determination. When you were a child no one could make you do anything by force, only by persuasion. I saw plainly that one day you would be a woman worthy of other Princesses of Rothery, and I trained you."

"You have taught me, and you have shown me that it was a woman's duty to be brave, uncle."

"And self-sacrificing. I feared for you because all women are frail."

"Not all, uncle," and Penelope raised her head. "You know I can bear a great deal."

"Yes, at the time, at the time—but afterwards? Women have no great sustaining power; they fall when you least expect it of them."

"I know what you mean, uncle. You think that if I—if I cared; but you are mistaken."

"You are a true Winskell, child. Tell me, can you sacrifice yourself, your inclinations, your life for an object?"

"Yes, I can. You mean for our home."

"I want to be plain with you. You can now fully understand. For years things have been going from bad to worse, we have been sinking deeper into debt. Instead of using his brains your father uses his arms, and fancies that will stop the tide. Nothing he does will prevent the downfall of this house—nothing but—"

"I know, uncle, I must marry a rich man: a man who will care enough for me to spend his money freely here. You mean that."

"Yes, Princess."

"I will do it—only give me the chance."

"Wait—do you understand? A woman, a beautiful woman as you are, child, is so easily led away by flattery, by what she calls love. She will throw every consideration to the winds to gratify her dreams of love—often a mere passing fancy. I do not speak without knowledge, child. When I was young I would have saved these acres, but now—"

Penelope had never heard her uncle talk of his own past life. She opened her large eyes which flashed so easily, and gazed admiringly at his face.

"Uncle, tell me; you never spoke of it before."

"Not now, not now, child. Some day, perhaps; but it is your turn now. The only chance for the old lands lies in your power."

"My brother will marry a peasant. I feel sure of that. What lady would have him? Oh, we are the only real Winskells left, uncle, you and I."

She rose quickly and stood up to her full height. She was above the Duke's shoulder, but so exquisitely proportioned that there was not an ungraceful line about her.

"I failed, Penelope."

"But I shall not. You will believe in me, won't you?"

"I will try to do so. Listen. You must marry a rich man, but I want you if you can, Penzie, to love him. With your nature it would be dangerous to hate him."

"I shall not think of myself."

"Can you help it?"

Penelope laughed. The laugh was not exactly joyous; it seemed to make the old oak shiver. It was so old, and she was so young—so young and so ignorant.

"If I make up my mind to anything, no matter what, you know I can do it. You have often said so yourself. I mastered some of my difficult lessons because you said that I must if I wished to be worthy of the old Winskells. Besides, it is not difficult; and I will obey you."

"Can you—can you?" said the Duke, half to himself.

"I will wear the talisman from this day, and that will remind me always of my vow."

Penelope hurried across the room and out of the passage. As she almost ran to the room where it was kept, she fancied that she heard steps following her. She paused; then a glow of pride flushed her cheek. The sound must be the footsteps

of the proud Princess! Evidently she approved of her wearing the talisman. When she came back to her uncle her face was resolute.

"Uncle, I will save the house of Rothery. You say I can, and I will."

The Duke took her hand and kissed it.

"Well said, child! Together we can save it, and we will."

COINS OF THE REALM.

It would seem to be an ungracious thing to find fault with the coins of the realm. They are so useful in themselves and so welcome in whatever shape they come, that artistic merit may in them be deemed superfluous. And people were very well satisfied, on the whole, with the coinage as it existed during the first half-century of Victoria's reign. The Guelphic profiles on the current coin were bold and straightforward, anyhow, and the portrait of the young Queen showed a gracious and pleasing face to all the world. There is the aspect of Royalty in the head, simply filleted and without adornments, that makes the old Victorian sovereign pleasant to behold. The more recent coinage is equally welcome, but it inspires at first sight a momentary misgiving. Is this, indeed, our English Queen, or is the image that of some potentate not of our acquaintance? The latest pattern has more merit and dignity than that of the Jubilee series, but does not come up to one's ideal of a fine coin. But that, indeed, would perhaps be far to seek, and we might have to go back to years B.C. to find a perfect specimen.

A fine coin was that gold stater of Philip the Second of Macedon, which, according to recent authorities, was the model of our first native British coinage. There had been gold discoveries in those remote days—say, B.C. 356—and a great coinage of gold procured from the mines of Philippi was then set on foot, which proved perhaps not an unmixed blessing to the country, as it may have excited the cupidity of those Gaulish tribes who plundered Greece B.C. 279, and who may have come home with their sacks full of gold, and spread the coins of Greece among their friends and neighbours.

A considerable number of early British coins have been found, chiefly in the southern and western counties of England, which probably date from before

the Roman occupation, and point to the existence of British kingdoms of a more civilised character than the Commentaries that Cæsar writ gave them credit for. But it seems that we must blame not the generally truthful Julius, but some unscrupulous interpolator for the statement that the Britons used only barter, and had brass and iron rings for circulating medium. But anyhow the coins are but barbarous imitations of a beautiful original. The head of Apollo is represented by a grotesque profile, the chariot and horses on the reverse of the coin by a sprawling device, such as a child of tender years might draw upon a slate. Inscriptions are rare, but one occurs of some interest, as "Cunobelin" is Shakespeare's Cymbeline, and we may fancy that the coin was dropped by Imogen on her pilgrimage to Wales.

The rude British coins must have soon been superseded by the technically excellent coinage of the Romans, who had mints in London, and York, and Colchester. And, doubtless, the Roman money continued to circulate long after the Legions had left the island. The Saxons, when they came, did not bring with them the art of coining; their rôle was to take other people's money, and they knew the value of it well enough. And they seem to have brought with them rudimentary notions of the penny and the shilling, although at first the sceat was their unit of account. Take care of the sceats, and the shillings will take care of themselves, was a good proverb in those days. But the Saxon shilling was a moveable quantity, and sometimes represented fivepence, and at others only fourpence. It was William the Conqueror who fixed the shilling immutably at twelve pennies, and gave the form to our monetary system which it still retains. Had he only made it ten how easy would have been the slide into the decimal system, which now seems impossible.

Under the later Saxon monarchs the silver coinage went on merrily. There were moneyers in every important town, with numerous artisans in their employment, but no artists apparently, for their coins are but rude and feeble imitations of Roman models. And there was no great improvement under the first Norman Kings; although they reduced the number of the moneyers, and finally concentrated them all in the Tower, where the "Royal Mint" remained till it was removed in

1810 to Tower Hill, where the guards from the Royal fortress still have it in charge.

During all this period, from the eighth to the thirteenth centuries, there is no trace of any gold coinage in England. Silver was the general medium of exchange, and such gold coins as were current came from abroad—florins from Florence, bezants from Byzantium, and even Arabic coins from the great Mohammedan empires of the East. But on the sixteenth of August, 1257, a Royal writ commanded the Mayor of London to proclaim that the gold money of the King, Henry the Third, should be current at the rate of twenty pennies sterling for every gold penny. And this ratio of value between silver and gold has been preserved, with few variations of any consequence, till our own days.

Under the Plantagenets, the coinage of the realm assumed a much higher character. The King's head on the silver coins is conventional, but full of merit; there is no attempt at portraiture, and the same design does duty generally throughout the reign. But it is not till the days of Edward the Third that any extensive coinage of gold is recorded. And then in 1344 appeared the gold noble, a really beautiful coin, rather heavier than our existing "sovereign." On this coin appears for the first time the ship or galley, said to commemorate Edward's destruction of the French fleet at Sluys, in 1340, and an emblem of the sovereignty of the seas now claimed by the English monarch. Thus an old distich is current:

For four things our noble showeth to me—
King, ship, and sword, and power of the sea.

And while the King, armed and crowned, appears no longer on horseback, but riding and ruling the waves; on the other side are armorial insignia and sacred emblems, with the mystic inscription, "I.H.C. Transiens per medium illorum ibat." This is a verse taken from the Vulgate, Luke, fourth chapter, thirtieth verse, translated in the authorised version, "But he, passing through the midst of them, went his way." In those days this verse had a peculiar significance, as it was not only in repute as a charm against perils by land or sea, but was also supposed to be used by the alchemists in their conjurations, and to be repeated by them at the supreme moment of the precipitation of the precious metal, "*per medium illorum*" signifying, according to some, "by means of fire and sulphur."

As people could not make out how Edward came by so much gold, and as it was known that one Ripley, an alchemist, was working for the King in the Tower, this issue of "nobles" was generally supposed to have come out of the alchemist's crucible. And thus the possessor of a "noble" had not only a coin, but a talisman, and a potent protection against fire and thieves and the various perils of land and sea.

The temporary triumph of the house of York has its permanent record in the coins of the realm. Under Edward the Fourth the noble was raised in weight and value, and, being now adorned with the rose as the badge of the house of York, was called a rose noble. Another gold coin of the same value was called an angel, as it bore the image of the archangel Saint Michael. But the Scriptural charm is repeated in all the gold coins of the period, and does not finally disappear until the epoch of the Reformation, when it went its way, with many other relics of earlier days. The ship, also, goes sailing on through the coins of many a reign till it finally disappears under James the First.

Under the Tudors a great change occurs in the coinage, which begins to assume a more modern form. In the older coinage the silver penny weighed, or should weigh, just the pennyweight troy, or twenty-four grains, and two hundred and forty of these pennyweights went to the pound, so that the "£" represented actually a pound of silver, the "s," or solidus, a conventional twentieth of a pound, and the "d," or denarius, the much-enduring penny. But the last was the only denomination represented by an actual coin, and, as in the course of centuries there had been a constant tendency to reduce the weight of the currency, a large readjustment had become necessary. Under Henry the Seventh for the first time the "sovereign" appears as the proper representative of a pound, and a gold standard seems to have been definitely fixed. And with this the shilling makes its appearance as an actual coin, the groat having been previously the most handy silver piece, with crowns and half-crowns both in silver and gold.

With Henry the Seventh, too, comes in the art of portraiture in coins, with the advantage of superior art in the engraving of the dies. Indeed a collection of English coins from this period offers a series of characteristic portraits of our

monarchs. Our English Bluebeard appears now in profile and now in full face, at first in the grace of youth, and latterly with the ferocious bulldog look. And Philip and Mary, like gossips on a snuffbox, face to face, suggesting the lines in "Hudibras,"

Still amorous, and fond, and billing,
Like Philip and Mary on a shilling.

In the coins of Elizabeth, the designers of our latter-day "sovereigns" may probably have sought inspiration and a precedent for the new coinage. No engraver of that age would have ventured to depict Her Majesty as getting old. Still, the flowing or braided locks disappear as the Virgin Queen advances in life, but the characteristic ruff supplies their place. James the bonhomme shows well on a coin, and his son, the unfortunate Charles, was a virtuoso in coins, and his reign is marked by many good pieces. Even some of those produced under the stress of siege and civil war display uncommon skill and spirit. The coins of the Commonwealth are as plain and severe as you might expect, but there are fine coins by Simon bearing the image of the Lord Protector.

The Restoration brought about sundry changes in the coinage. Hitherto the coins had been hammered—the impression, that is, struck with a sledge-hammer—and although the screw press had been introduced a century before, it met with no favour at the hands of the officers of the Mint. But Charles introduced the new "mill," which serrated the edges of the coin as well as striking the impression, and milled money gradually superseded the other, although it was not till 1732 that all hammered gold coins, then known as broad pieces, were finally called in. Importations of gold by the African Company gave rise to the popular guineas. And Charles, for the first time, instituted a regular copper coinage.

There were, indeed, copper coins already in existence, manufactured under Royal patent by some favoured beneficiary. Lord Harrington, the guardian of the Queen of Bohemia, had held such a patent for farthings, which, for a time, went by his name.

I will not bate a Harrington o the sum,
writes rare old Ben in one of his masques. Charles started the familiar halfpenny. Pennies in copper came later—not till 1797—so that the once popular expression of "halfpence" for copper coins in general had its justification in the facts of the case. At the same period, dating from the in-

troduction of the milled money, silver coins under the value of sixpence ceased to be struck, and silver pennies disappeared from circulation. But small quantities of silver coins, from a penny to fourpence, have been ever since struck as Maundy money in order that the recipient of the King's or Queen's alms on Holy Thursday may have the right number of pence, corresponding to the number of years of the monarch's age, told out in good wholesome silver.

Threepenny pieces were first coined by Edward the Sixth. As for the fourpenny bit, or Joey, so called after the economist Joseph Hume, who is said to have suggested their issue, the coin seems to have vanished altogether, although for a long time it circulated with the threepenny piece, and bus-conductors used to distinguish between the pieces by running the thumb-nail along the edge, for the fourpenny piece was milled, while the other was not.

But for small change Charles's halfpence, which were made current by proclamation of the sixth of August, 1672, long had the field to themselves. They were a first experiment in copper coinage, and the figure of Britannia on the reverse is said to have been designed with the beautiful Frances Stuart, afterwards Duchess of Richmond, for a model.

A good notion of these later Stuarts was the introduction of pewter or tin halfpence, anticipating the "nickel" of American and German small change, which is so much easier of carriage. Inscriptions round the edges of the larger coins instead of milling, such as are still seen on crown pieces, are of the same date. John Evelyn, of "Sylva," suggested the motto, "Decus et Tutamen," which is certainly neat and appropriate, as the inscription is at once an ornament and a defence against clipping and other defacements of the Royal image. And from the same Restoration period dates the practice of making the Royal profile face the same way during the whole reign. Charles the First was literally Mr. Facing-both-ways, as Bunyan would have named him, and Charles the Second makes a volte-face in the course of his reign, but sticks to the right after that. William the Fourth faced to the right, and Victoria faces always to the left in all coins and medals.

It would not do to forget Queen Anne, whose farthings have won such surprising fame. They are really good coins by

John Croker, and dated 1714, and the Queen's death put a stop to their issue; so that they are really rather scarce, and a good specimen may be worth as much as fifteen shillings. The bust of the Queen on the coins recalls the fact that Queen Anne, on her accession, decidedly objected to being represented on the coins with neck and shoulders uncovered, as had been the custom, and that she was therefore accommodated with a fichu. Some of Queen Anne's guineas bear the inscription, "Vigo," in small letters, and this denotes that they were made from gold taken at Vigo in 1702, when so many rich galleons were captured or sunk. And so "Lima" on guineas of 1745-46 records Anson's successes on the coast of Peru, when he captured the Acapulco galleon, and brought home much treasure in silver and gold.

Another notable guinea, not very scarce, but still prized if only to place among charms and trinkets, is of a type designed by Louis Pingo in 1787, with a spade-shaped shield on the reverse; and these guineas, generally known as "spadeace," were issued till 1799. The copper coinage, too, of the same period is noticeable: a twopenny and penny piece, of 1797, the first of the kind ever issued, with a heavy rim, and plethoric-looking head of Farmer George, and on the reverse a figure of Britannia, now with lighthouse and shipping, and once more ruling the waves.

The guinea, it will be remembered, retired from the scene in 1817, and was succeeded by the "sovereign," which has reigned ever since without a rival. Among the chief events in its prosperous career may be noted the reappearance in 1871 of Saint George and his dragon, from a design by Piatrucci for George the Fourth—replacing the shield of arms which previously occupied the reverse of the coin. For some time the two models were issued together, but since 1874 George has had the field to himself. A fine George and dragon may be noticed on a "George noble" of Henry the Eighth's time, the saint brandishing a long spear or lance, better adapted for the killing of dragons, one would think, than the short sword with which our latter-day saint is armed.

But perhaps the most startling event in the recent annals of our coinage was the introduction of the florin of 1849—a new coin, designed as a sort of tentative approach to the decimal system. The florin was unlucky at starting, for the words "Dei Gratia," which had figured on

the coinage ever since the days of Edward the First, had been omitted. A great outcry was made against the "godless coins," which were soon recalled. But a curious fact is that few of them came back, and that some three quarters of a million of them remain—not in circulation, for they are rarely met with, but hoarded or used as trinkets, keepsakes, or curiosities.

Of more recent interest is the Jubilee coinage, just now superseded by a certainly better model. Connected with this is the story of the sixpences, which when gilt proved to be excellent imitations of half-sovereigns. And this incident is paralleled in the reign of George the Fourth, when a half-sovereign was produced so wonderfully like a gilt sixpence, that the same advantage was taken of the likeness. The Jubilee sixpences, like the half-sovereigns, were recalled, but very few found their way to the melting-pot; they have gone to join the godless florins in the limbo of vanished coins. The same may be said of the shillings with Royal arms on the reverse, of which only a stray specimen here and there remains in circulation.

A GLANCE AT NORTH UIST.

VERY few mere tourists find their way to the Uists, North and South. It is just as well that this is so, seeing that the accommodation for them is exceedingly meagre. During the season, at any rate, the two hotels of Loch Maddy on North Uist, and Loch Boisdale on South Uist, are pretty sure to be crowded—with anglers, not sightseers. The man who comes hither at a venture will, in all likelihood, be disappointed, first with the scenery, and, secondly, by the innkeeper's regretful apologies at his inability to receive him. The steamers which carry passengers and the mails to these isles of the Outer Hebrides are far from being the best or the largest of the fleet of Mr. David MacBrayne. And the ordinary holiday seeker will not, unless he is a glutton for sea-breezes, appreciate the need he may be under of making the round tour by boat in futile quest of an anchored roof to his head. The thing to do is to wire to the island you wish to visit, and not to set out for it until you have telegraphic assurance that there is a bedroom for you. The Uists are not like common British seaside resorts. They have no trim lodging-houses with placards in the windows inviting

visitors at least to take tea in them. The rule of the crofter still holds here, much to the dissatisfaction of the lairds of the land, and a night or series of nights in a Hebridean crofter's hut cannot be thought of by an experienced person without grave misgivings.

As the steamer approaches North Uist from the Minch, you are struck by the extraordinary interminglement of land and water here. Rocky and weather-clad capes run out towards the sea, and the sea in its turn rushes and winds into the heart of the island, forming an infinite number of lochs, great and small. These last in their turn are connected with others farther inland and on different levels. If the island were more near the centres of our great towns, it might be adjusted with a little engineering effort into a settlement that for its amphibious eccentricities would rival old Venice herself. Here, however, we are in the wilds. There are two or three rather assuming stone houses built close to the landing stage; there is the hotel; one sees a church, and an institution which may be either a workhouse—an absurd idea here!—a school, or a lunatic asylum; there are also a dozen or so cottages of the old style, with the smoke drifting lazily from their open doors. And that is all, at least as far as human habitations are concerned. Once you have gone half a mile from Loch Maddy—as the township is called—you are surrounded by heather and bog, and lakes and lakelets with sprawling arms; hills of no very startling shape are before you close at hand, and in the distance you see the grey outlines of the heights of Harris to the north and South Uist to the south. Sea birds are screeching over your head and across the tidal reaches of water on the right hand and the left. And you will be fortunate if the midges are sparing you the torments they have at their disposal. The road meanders subtly across the green and crimson country, turning with the sinuosities of the waterways, towards the north-west, where the laird of the isle has his abode.

It is quite worth while to climb the first hill that confronts you in your wanderings. The heather is thick on its flanks and tries hard to trip you. But it need not be difficult to overcome these trials. And there is compensation in the luscious perfume, which seems to fill the buzzing bees with an insane ecstasy. Having attained the summit of a few hundred feet above

sea-level, the marvellous scene is well declared. North, south, east, and west there is a surface little less flat than the Fens, with a dozen or so rounded, stony, and crimson hills rising from its midst, and water, water everywhere among the land. At low tide this water turns the island into a bewildering archipelago. The number of its islets is countless, and the Atlantic bounds them. Looking along the winding road you see, perhaps, a single human being leading a cow. The heather, mosses, and lichens at your feet are worth some regard, and so are the insects and entomological specimens which animate the mild air. But Princetown on Dartmoor is a volatile place compared to North Uist, thus seen.

Yet stay; even while you are compassionating this poor, dismal, remote tract of land and water, the sun comes from behind the heavy Atlantic clouds and gives instant glory to the island. Its carpet of heather glows with Tyrian brilliancy. The yellow seawrack, which clings to the rocky zones of its tidal lakes, turns dazzling as liquid gold; and the myriad of little lakes elsewhere are like pools of silver. The sense of desolation remains, but it is now to be associated with a spot of dreamlike, entrancing beauty.

It is as well, however, not to come to this romantic little island without a full purse. Civilised mortals are made to pay well for their periodic incursions into the Hebridean wilds. The twenty or five-and-twenty souls who make up the hotel's complement do not come here to save money, but to catch fish. If they may succeed to their heart's content in the latter particular, they may also be relied upon to treat parsimony with scorn. Good days on the lakes are celebrated with champagne, and whisky has to do full service good days and bad days alike.

There is a fine martial flavour about the guests at the table d'hôte. You could tell it at a glance. Those straight-backed, white-haired, tall old gentlemen who sit side by side with such fiercely twirled moustaches must be either Generals or Colonels; even as the dashing young men of forty or forty-five on the other side of the table carry the unmistakeable air military. In effect it is so. There is some good blood present. The veterans once made a small stir in the world—at least, in the frontier world of India. Now they are content to take trout in Loch Fada or Loch Huna of North Uist—until the

shooting begins, when they and their armouries will betake themselves elsewhere. For the North Uist shooting is not great, unless sea birds may be included in it; though on the other hand seals may be shot readily enough among the rocks of the adjacent isles, many of which are connected with the main island by fords at low water, across which it behoves the traveller to carry himself somewhat shrewdly. These straight-backed, strong-wristed veterans do not unbend readily in general society, but they may be relied upon to thaw comfortably in the smoking-room under the combined influences of cigars, toddy, memories of past sport in many lands, and hopes of good luck on the morrow. They keep their hearts and energies amazingly green upon the whole.

One such I am tempted to limn gently in outline. He was Colonel of a Highland regiment, small, bald as the proverbial billiard-ball, active as a bee, hot-tempered, and delightful. A happy chance threw me into his society for three or four days at one of these Hebridean inns. The tales with which he enlivened the tedium of the dull grey weather—with plenty of drenching rain—were good to hear and better still to remember. He was Scottish to the core, and had clan records at his fingers' ends. He was further an enthusiastic and most skilful piper. As soon as breakfast was over he would don his Glengarry bonnet, take up his beloved pipes, and begin a methodical course on them, marching to and fro in the hotel room and awakening exceedingly strong echoes. The hotel servants gathered in the corridor to listen to this unwonted concert, and the bare-legged lads and lassies hising to school tarried outside and held their peace reverentially, while they forgot the school-master and the schoolmistress and all else except the absorbing music. And all the time the admirable little Colonel marched up and down the room with uplifted head and a fixed gaze. Few pipe-majors could beat him at the pastime. I hope I may never forget him. He was one of the most typical of Highlanders I have ever met, and withal rather curt and ill at ease in a society to which he had not willingly accustomed himself. While I write I have his photograph before me, taken with his pipes. It makes me smile with serene contentment to look at it.

But to recur to Loch Maddy. Entering the harbour if the weather is clear, you notice two large basalt hills, islets, stand-

ing boldly from the sea on either hand. These give their name to the place. They are the haven's "maddies," or watch-dogs. One would like to know something about the various craft they have, during the last two thousand years, seen enter here. The Picts were once much at home on North Uist. You may discover their rounded duns on certain of the tiny island spots in the many lakes which give such matchless individuality to the island. Not all the causeways which bound their homes to the shores can be traced, but some can. And by them are white and yellow lilies and tall reeds, offering delectable shelter to the trout in the heat of the day. It is a far leap from the time of the Picts to the eighteenth century. The imagination, however, may occupy itself with the Norwegians and Danes, who were once as much at home in these waters as the Hebridean herring-boats now are. Enough for us to remember the chase for Prince Charlie after Culloden. Loch Maddy was lively with war-ships then. But the Englishmen could not catch the Prince. He dodged them among the inlets of North Uist, and then from islet to islet. And finally Flora Macdonald, whose grave in Skye has now become a landmark to mariners, gave him her memorable aid through the island which has made her esteemed like a canonised saint. Prince Charlie had not a pleasant time up here. He was glad to gather crabs and cockles on the sea-shore, and make his dinner from them; and yet more glad when he could mix cow's brains and oatmeal and enjoy such Royal rissoles. But probably he found Flora's petticoats and gowns the most trying parts of his experience in quest of sheer liberty, when all hopes of a crown were at an end.

Now and then they have a cattle-fair at Loch Maddy. It is a great occasion. Boat after boat comes in from the isles from far and near, and the steamships also land their four-footed freights. Given fine weather, and one may almost be unmindful even of the midges amid this scene of excellent colour and extraordinary vivacity. You hear the Gaelic sounding on all sides then. It is difficult to think you are in a part of Great Britain. And the lowing of the shaggy, variegated little Highland kine, the bleating of the snow-white sheep—some four-horned, showing their St. Kilda origin—and lambs, added to the neighing of horses and the kicking of the ponies, all in conjunction, produce a fine

Babel of sound. Of course, at such a time the canny trader and the itinerant pedlar are much to the fore. They have their booths for gingerbread and ribbons. The villagers from the east coast of the island are almost overcome by the spectacle of so much commerce.

An artist would do well to arrange for a wire from Loch Maddy when such scenes as these are in progress. He would find an embarrassing amount of rich material for his brush. What with the crimson heather; the grey hills in the distance; the Atlantic clouds drifting, like huge white geese, one after the other across the blue heavens; the pale yellow cottages of the old time, so low at the threshold that the gaunt master of the house has to stoop to enter, and with the smoke sailing airily out of the blackened hole in the thatch; the gleaming water here, there, and everywhere, with its lilies, its lichened rocks, and the golden weed tangle which marks the tidal line; the cattle fighting the flies chest deep in the pools, and the infinite variety of the human element, there ought to be magnificent scope for the realist. A tipsy islander may be found here and there, and an idiot or two—there are a good many of the half-witted in the Hebrides—as well as a “cailleach” (old crone), who does not mind smoking in public the pipeful of tobacco that has been bestowed upon her by an indulgent stranger. As a study in complexions alone the cattle-fair at Loch Maddy would be worth seeing.

But the weather must be civil, else nowhere shall you find a more disconsolate gathering, or one more like to raise in you a sympathetic twinge or two of rheumatism.

Most people who come to North Uist come to fish. They do well. Whether for sea-fish or trout the island, with its ramificatory inlets, is an excellent angler's resort. The only drawback is the distance from the hotel of certain of the fresh-water lochs. This necessitates a drive out in the morning and the corresponding drive home in the evening. Weather and purse permitting, however, there need be no great hardship about this methodical view of North Uist's waterways, heather, hills, and moorland, some of which is bog bad to get entangled in.

There are also pedestrians who do not take an interest in fly-fishing. For these I must really write a few lines of warning, inspired—as all strong warnings must be

—by doleful experience. Let it be remembered in the first place that though the loch which is called Loch Maddy—and which is just a sea bay with innumerable arms—is only about ten miles in area, it has a coast line reckoned at some three hundred miles. Think of it! Your friend in a boat takes you three or four miles, and then, at your urgent request—you wish to stretch your legs—puts you ashore on some heathery knoll. He does not know what he is doing, and you, in proposing to stroll back to the hotel in time for the seven o'clock dinner, do not know what you are undertaking. Unless you take to the water, in fact, and swim sundry of the channels, you may chance to have a three days' tramp before you!

These channels, moreover, are not very easy to negotiate. They are in many instances blessed or cursed with an exceedingly swift current. Look at them when the tide is coming in. No boat could pull against them unless it were manned out of all proportion to its size. It may be imagined then that the swimmer would have to float at their mercy, and their mercy might not be kind enough to help him much on his way.

I, for my part, quite lost patience with Loch Maddy one afternoon. Having left the high-road—a capital one, considering—I got involved among lochs and sea inlets, and had finally, after several wasted hours, and when the sun had got alarmingly low in the heavens, to make a devious track in a direction immediately opposite to the one in which the hotel lay. It was dark when I reached my quarters, but I was grateful that I had succeeded. To be late for dinner was a small misfortune compared to what might have been my lot, had the night set in wildly—as it well can on these fringes of the Atlantic—and I had found myself forced to seek heather and rock shelter until the morning.

Upon the whole, North Uist is a quaintly gratifying place for a holiday. It is not sensational, though it may obviously become so, especially if you miss the tide in trying to cross the ford from one or other of its neighbour islets, and get involved in a race for life with the Atlantic waves. Nor, on the other hand, is it bracing. There are days, indeed, when, between vexatious midges and the relaxing air, you feel limp and dismal enough to give up the ghost—if any one were present to relieve you off-hand of your

vital part. But in the end you do not feel dissatisfied with your selection of a touring centre. And that is no small thing.

The worst of the Uists is the disagreeable hour at which it behoves you to depart from or arrive at them. The steamer goes from North Uist to South Uist at midnight, and reaches the latter place at the unfamiliar hour of half-past two in the morning. Nor may you then hope to continue the slumber you may have begun; for it does not stay at Loch Boisdale—the capital of South Uist—but journeys on immediately to the south.

Contingencies, however, as often as not, enable the harassed traveller to finish his night's sleep. We are here in the very homeland of fog and mist, storms and rain. It is never very cold off these Outer Hebrides isles; nor is it ever prostratingly hot. But frequently, just when the visitor has begun to put his portmanteaux together in readiness for the landing, the grey haze of the sea thickens and closes in. Then the captain gives the order "half-speed," and finally "stop." Down goes the anchor with a gruesome clanking, and an indefinite "wait" has begun. This is, of course, likely to be a most charming experience if there is a heavy swell on, and the traveller is not without qualms of sea sickness. But it cannot be helped. The outlying rocks of all the Hebrides are not to be faced at a venture; nor can the harbours themselves be tackled without every assurance of a sufficiency of sea-room.

THE BODE.

THE sun rode high at noontide, the wind blew from the north,
The boat lay trim and tant enough out on the dancing Forth,
And blue and bright across the waves lay the long links of Fife,
While on the shore the fisherman spoke to his month-old wife.

"Go home and keep the hearth, lass, and weep no more for me;
It's lying ripe and ready, the rich harvest of the sea.
Wouldst keep me like a bairn at home, when all the men are off,
With idle hands and empty pouch, a weakling and a scoff?"

"Go home and keep the hearth, lass, leave freit and dream alone,
I'm bound to do my honest best, and God can guard His own.
For all thou met a hare yestreen, for all thy dreams were bad,
I say, go home, and keep the hearth warm for thine own old lad!"

"Nay, but," she sobbed, "frae bonnie Perth thou knowst thou brought me here,
And we who spring of Highland blood we have our own strange lere.
My grand-dam had the second sight, and, as I love thee well,
I saw thy shroud below thy chin, I know what that would tell."

He kissed the rosy trembling lips, he kissed the drowned blue eyes,
He bade her look to laughing seas, and sunny, cloudless skies.
He swore the kerchief that she gave was all his jersey showed,
And she must be a Lowland wife, nor reck of Highland bode.

Out from the Haven full sailed there went a gallant bark,
The sun sank over the Ochils, the shores of Fife grew dark;
The woman sate by her lonely hearth as the grey dawn filtered in,
She said, "I saw his shroud last night, it was abune his chin."

And long might Highland Mary watch through weary night and day,
For the boat that bore her mate from her to far off Stornaway;
For back to Seaton Harbour full many a coble came,
But never with the face she knew, the voice that spoke her name.

With a babe called for the father who never saw his face,
Through shade and shine each day she comes; looks from the landing place,
Then turns to keep the hearth where he will never enter now;
And she says, "Could I see his shroud to-night, it were abune his brow."

THE LATE MR. LYMPET.

A COMPLETE STORY.

IF there was one thing on which we Lympets did pride ourselves, it was on the family name. From our earliest childhood we were taught to believe that a Lympet was apart from, and superior to all other men; as my dear father used to say, there were working people, gentry, nobility, and Lympets. The family held the first place in our estimations; we were Lympets first, and Britons afterwards. Not one of us but gloried in his birth, and did his best to live up to our proud old family motto, "*quod tango teneo*." As for our belief in the grandeur of our name, it did not admit of argument. It was almost a part of our religion, and, like the Chinese, we worshipped our ancestors. Not that they had done anything very particular. The mere student of history has possibly never even heard of them; for none of them ever acquired vulgar fame. No violent partisans they! In the broils and turmoils, the wars of parties and the feuds of factions, which marked the stormy

youth of England, they mixed but little. They played no prominent part for White Rose or Red Rose, King or Parliament, Stuart or Guelph. They never attempted to ride the high horse, and as a result, through all the troubles they kept the family seat. In truth, a Lympet had too little to gain to peril his life and lands in any one's cause. By birth he was placed above ambition. Being already a Lympet he could rise no higher, for, like the Rohan, he could make the proud vaunt: "Roi ne puis, Prince ne daigne, Lympet je suis!"

Therefore the Lympets generally held aloof, and when, as sometimes happened, they found themselves compelled to take their stand with one party or the other, they acted with great discretion, and compromised themselves as little as possible. As an instance of Lympet tact in trying times, I may mention the career of the sixth Baron Rockborough, who acceded to the headship of our house in the last year of the Great Rebellion. This nobleman first served in Ireland under Cromwell, who rewarded him with a large grant of land in that country; next, he was created Viscount Cumberground in the peerage of Ireland by Charles the Second after the Restoration; and finally he was advanced to the dignity of Earl of Kilproctor by William the Third, shortly after which just recognition of his merits the good old man passed away, full of years and honours, leaving behind him a name which will ever be fondly cherished by his descendants. As a benefactor of his species—I mean, of course, of the Lympets—he must be placed high above all our other ancestors, and second only to the Founder of the Family, Hugo de Lympet himself, who came over with the Conqueror, and won the estates which remain in the possession of his descendants to this day. And herein lies the secret of our family greatness and our family pride. What a Lympet grasped at the time of the Conquest, a Lympet holds in the present year of grace. For over eight hundred years we have remained firmly planted on the ground gained by our forefather; and if we never availed ourselves of the opportunities by which other families raised themselves to dazzling heights of magnificence, we also avoided the pitfalls which sooner or later swallowed up these same families and their followers.

But though our house has made no great figure in English history, I would not have you think that it has done the state no

service. On the contrary, the younger scions of our stock have always displayed a commendable eagerness to serve the country in any department where the duties were light and the pay was fair. It is only when the law of primogeniture is strictly observed that Lympets are possible; and when the law of primogeniture is strictly observed, superfluous sons can be but ill-provided for. But the public service is, despite the proverb, an excellent inheritance, and one to which the junior Lympets considered they were justly entitled.

I need hardly say that not one of them ever so far forgot himself as to stoop to trade; their sense of what was due to their name was too powerful to allow them to sink so far. So strong, indeed, was this feeling that the daughters of our house often preferred to pass their lives in single blessedness rather than change the dear old name of which they were so justly proud. Few families can boast so many old maids. The ribald have ventured to attribute this fact to the Lympet dowries, which are unfortunately small, and to the Lympet mouth, which is undeniably large, rather than to the Lympet pride. But how can such rude clay sympathise with the noble spark which fires a Lympet's breast? What can they know of the glorious associations which endear the grand old name of Lympet to every member of that noble house?

Unfortunately one cannot live upon a name—at least, not for ever. I lived on mine as long as it was possible, but a time at last came when I found that the Lympet name, highly as we rated it, was of little value on the back of a bill. Commercial people—hard, practical men—looked at it askance, and requested the additional security of some wretched Jones or Smith, who could not trace his pedigree beyond his grandfather. In short, I was becoming financially embarrassed, and, what was worse, did not know how to extricate myself. I had no occupation, no profession. My father had designed me for the Church, for he was the patron of a very snug living on his Irish property; but, alas! while I was still at school, the man Gladstone came along with his axe and lopped the Irish Church away like the diseased limb of a Hawarden oak. Thus prevented from serving the Church, I would have been very willing to serve the state; but—these are evil days for

Lympets!—the system of competitive examination proved a barrier I was unable to surmount, and England lost a valuable servant. As trade was out of the question and the bar offered no opening, I decided to adopt the career for which my talents best fitted me, and to do nothing at all. And I did it in excellent style, too, as a Lympet should; the honour of our name suffered nothing at my hands, I can assure you. My allowance from my father, which was small—for my sisters had to be provided for, and Cumberground, my elder brother, was wickedly extravagant—and a small private fortune which I had inherited from my mother, I employed mainly as pocket-money; almost everything else I obtained on credit. And so, throwing an occasional sop to Cerberus in the shape of a payment "on account" to the more pressing of my creditors, and resorting to an elaborate system of "paper" when I was in want of ready money, I contrived to live in honourable ease for a good many years.

But Time brings all things to perfection—and bills to maturity. Then they have to be renewed, and a renewed bill is a redoubled difficulty. Living on paper is like skating on ice. So long as it is strong enough to bear you, you can flourish about, cutting figures with the best; but if you overweight it, it suddenly gives way beneath your feet, and you vanish out of sight. Early last year certain unmistakable groans and cracks warned me that my footing was dangerous. Bill discounters who had always smiled on me began to frown, every post brought letters requesting payment of little accounts, and tradesmen besieged my doors or lay in wait for me in the street. Altogether the outlook was very black, or, at best, dun-coloured. Many a night I sat in my rooms gloomily smoking my pipe and reviewing the situation, but I could only see one way out of my difficulties. My debts were so large that I could never hope to pay them unaided, and where was that aid to come from? Not from my father, who had no money to spare. The Irish property of Kilproctor, from which the chief title of our house is derived, is situated in a particularly lawless corner of the country, the inhabitants of which always had a rooted objection to paying anybody, and latterly under the Land League they have evaded their legal obligations in the most shameless manner, so that most of them owe arrears of rent which they can never

hope—and never intend—to pay. In fact the Kilproctor estates might as well be in Spain as in Ireland, for all the money my father gets out of them. No, it was useless to appeal to him, and equally so to apply to Cumberground, who was in debt himself. Obviously there was only one course to pursue: I should have to marry money.

But it was necessary first to catch my heiress. Luckily I knew where to lay my hand on two who, I flattered myself, were disposed to look kindly on me. I had been acquainted with them for about a year, and I had already paid them a certain amount of attention, for the idea of a wealthy marriage had always been more or less in my mind, though I had wished to defer the evil day as long as possible. One was a Miss Merrick, the other was a Miss Slugg. Both were young and both were wealthy, without encumbrances in the shape of fathers. It is true that their fortunes had been amassed in trade; but, after all, that was a trifling drawback. The Lympet pride permitted me to spend the money which had been grubbed up by another; it merely forbade me to spoil my fingers in grubbing it up for myself. The deceased Merrick and the deceased Slugg had grubbed to some purpose in their time, and their daughters were undoubtedly "catches." Which should I strive to land? Miss Merrick was much the prettier of the two, but she was also the elder, and had more knowledge of the world, more suitors, and a better idea of her own value. I could see that she would require skilful handling, and perhaps more time than I had at my disposal. Miss Slugg, on the other hand, was very romantic, rather shy, and not particularly clever. She was not yet of age, and she had seen little of society of any sort. Her father dying soon after she left school, she had not entered the world till she was twenty; and her aunt, with whom she lived, had no very grand acquaintances. My rank was likely to stand me in better stead with her than with Miss Merrick, who had more than one eldest son hovering in her train. Above all, Miss Slugg possessed one hundred thousand pounds, and Miss Merrick only eighty thousand. That settled it. As I had made up my mind to dispose of a share in the Lympet name, it was my obvious duty to get the highest available price for it. My honourable pride would not allow me to depreciate its value by

taking eighty thousand pounds when I could get a hundred. And so I decided on Miss Slugg.

I need not dwell upon my courtship, the course of which was as smooth and untroubled as a canal's. It was also about as dull. For three months it flowed placidly on, and then I proposed and was accepted. But we kept our engagement secret, and I even persuaded Miss Slugg to consent to a private marriage. She had wondered at my request, and had made a few slight objections at first, but the idea soon recommended itself to her. It would be so romantic, she declared. My reasons were not romantic, however. To be frank, I had seen too many marriages spoiled by the meddling interference of lawyers and guardians to risk inviting it in my own case. When Law comes in at the door Love flies out at the window; sometimes it is even kicked out. I did not want any settlements made which might interfere with my settlement with my creditors and my own settlement in life. Nor did I care to expose my most private affairs to the prying gaze of an impertinent vulgarian. I refer to Miss Slugg's uncle, her father's younger brother. The two Sluggs had made their money together in some way connected with tallow—I have never cared to enter into the revolting details—and I knew that he would be unwilling to let the fortune, which he had helped to make, pass entirely out of the family; for he had a cub of a son whom he hoped to see married to the heiress. I might count upon his opposition as certain, and my debts were heavy enough to make an excellent weapon in his hands. Perhaps he might at least persuade his niece to wait a little, and I could not afford to wait even a few months. My fortunes were desperate; the vultures were already circling round my head. And so I had determined on a private marriage, and had induced Miss Slugg to consent to it.

Our arrangements were simple enough. On the morning after her twenty-first birthday, Miss Slugg would leave her uncle's house quietly, and repair to a church a few streets off, where Belinda, only daughter of the late Oliver Slugg, Esquire, would be united to the Honourable George Lympet, second son of the Earl of Kilproctor. No cards. After the ceremony the happy pair would proceed to the residence of the bride's uncle and receive his congratulations on the auspicious event, prior to starting on their honeymoon. Thus all the loathsome

preliminaries would be avoided, the sordid inquisition into ways and means, the distressing family dissensions, the degrading precautionary measure of settlements. On the whole it was a clever little plan, and one which, I venture to think, reflects no small credit on me.

But I was too true a Lympet to take such a serious step without first seeking the sanction of the head of our house. Three days before the date fixed for our wedding I left London, and travelled down to Rockborough Towers to beg my father's blessing and borrow a little money, which was of even more importance to me. The blessing was a luxury, but the money was a necessity. I had the marriage expenses and the cost of the honeymoon to provide for. I felt—perhaps I was over-scrupulous—that it would not be right to begin drawing on my wife's resources during a period supposed to be dedicated to romance; that it was too early to commence the serious business of life. Therefore I had decided to ask my father for a loan, hoping that, when he perceived I was about to attain an honourable independence, and was never likely to trouble him again, he would make me a present of the sum required. And as the event showed, I was not mistaken.

It was after dinner, when my sisters had left us together over our wine, that I made my confession, and informed my father that I was about to marry Miss Slugg, the charming young heiress. He did not receive the news with any enthusiasm.

"Slugg!" he said, raising his eyebrows. "What a horrible name! How on earth did you manage to become acquainted with this young person who has the misfortune to be called Slugg?"

"It is her misfortune, as you say, sir," I replied evasively, "but not her fault. Think how terrible it must be to have to answer to the name of Slugg, and pity her."

"Of course I pity her," he said quietly, "but I really do not think I could bring myself to know any one called—Slugg. Pah!"

"I do not ask you to, sir," I returned. "I do not wish you to receive Miss Slugg, but Mrs. Lympet. By marriage she will be justly entitled to a name that kings might envy."

"Exactly. And you propose to bestow this kingly name upon a Slugg. Really, old Simon, first Earl, would turn in his grave could he hear you."

"Judging by our revered ancestor's conduct in life," I remarked drily, "he would be only too willing to turn in his grave were anything to be gained by it. In this matter I am acting as he would do were he in my place."

"Indeed?" said my father, looking reassured. "It is not a foolish love affair, then?"

"I am not so much in love as to have forgotten prudence. Love is said to be blind; my eyes are open."

"And this Miss Slugg is really a prize worth winning?"

"She has a heart of gold!"

My father's face fell considerably.

"And," I continued, "she has a hundred thousand pounds."

My father brightened up at once.

"Her parents are dead, and she has no brothers or sisters."

My father began to smile pleasantly.

"Her only relatives are her uncle and his family, with whom I mean to quarrel on our wedding day."

My father rubbed his hands together, and the smile broadened into benevolence.

"Thus," I concluded, "we will soon be able to forget that she ever was a Slugg."

"Your sisters will never let her forget it," observed my father. "Still, it is a comfort to reflect that we will not be continually reminded of the fact by the intrusion of impossible relatives bearing that most impossible of names. On the whole, you might have done much worse. A hundred thousand pounds, you say? Certainly the pill is well gilded."

"And pills are only unpleasant when they are kept in the mouth too long," I added. "But the name of Slugg need never be in our mouths again after the marriage ceremony."

"True, true," replied my father; "and certainly the sooner we forget it the better. The young lady should really be greatly obliged to you. Slugg! Ha, ha! I wonder how it feels to be called Slugg."

"I wonder," I said; and then we both laughed very heartily.

After that I had no more trouble. Before we left the dining-room I had obtained his consent and a substantial cheque as a wedding present; and, possessed of his blessing and signature, I returned to London next day.

The following morning Belinda and I were united. Everything went off without

a hitch, exactly as we had planned it; and before the maiden had been missed from her uncle's house, the wife had returned with her husband to announce the great news in person. Mr. Slugg was in his study when we arrived, and thither at once I repaired "to beard the lion in his den," while my wife sought the morning-room to make her peace with her aunt. For my own part, I was intent on war. I did not wish to be "on terms" with my wife's relations, I wanted to forget the very name of Slugg, and I hoped that in his rage and disappointment, Belinda's uncle might use words so cutting as to sever completely all ties between us. Mr. Slugg showed more self-control than I had expected, however, for he received what must have been most unwelcome news with remarkable composure. He bowed to the inevitable—and with more politeness than I had thought him capable of. Being a business man, he probably looked at the matter from a business point of view. The mischief was done, and all he could say would not undo it; the strongest language in his vocabulary would be of no avail against the few words spoken by the clergyman a short half-hour before, and so he saved his breath. Nevertheless, he surveyed me with a very evil smile, and there was a sad lack of sincerity about the tone in which he wished me joy.

"But what of Belinda?" he concluded. "Surely I ought to be amongst the first to congratulate her on becoming Mrs. Slugg?"

He laid a peculiar emphasis on the word Slugg, which at once attracted my attention.

"Pardon me," I interrupted; "it was a slip of the tongue, no doubt, but you have called my wife by a name which does not now belong to her. Your niece is no longer a Slugg, she has become a Lympet. No one whose privilege it is to be called Lympet would like to be called S— anything else."

"Am I to understand," he cried eagerly, "that Belinda abandons the name of Slugg?"

"Does it seem so strange?" I enquired. "I have always supposed that it was customary for a wife to adopt her husband's name when she married."

"It is the rule," replied Mr. Slugg slowly, "but there are exceptions. Husbands have been known to take their wives' names—for a consideration."

"I would have you know, sir," I re-

torted angrily, "that no Lympet would barter his name away for any consideration whatsoever!"

"A noble sentiment!" cried Mr. Slugg joyfully, looking like a miser who had just found s'x'pence. "A noble sentiment! You are right, sir. What is a paltry hundred thousand pounds compared to a name so ancient and so honourable?"

A hundred thousand pounds! That was the exact amount of Belinda's fortune. What did the man mean by such a pointed reference to it?

"And I am ashamed to say I took you for a fortune-hunter!" he continued excitedly. "You—you who kick the dross away and say in effect: 'Let me keep the honoured name of Lympet, I care not who has the fortune!'"

"Excuse me," I broke in hastily, "but if you're talking about my wife's fortune, I do care very much who has it. Hang it all, there's no mistake about that, is there?"

"Surely, Mr. Lympet," said Mr. Slugg, calming down and beginning to look very anxious, "you are aware of the provisions of my brother's will? You must be. You discard the name of Slugg with your eyes open, is it not so? You know the consequences and are prepared to accept them? You would not change the noble name of Lympet for thrice my niece's fortune? Of course not! 'Not for any consideration whatsoever.' I heard you say so."

At his words a cold shiver ran down my back. I knew nothing about the deceased Slugg's will. My information concerning Belinda's fortune had come to me on most excellent authority, and she herself had told me that she was at liberty to marry whom she pleased after her twenty-first birthday, but of the provisions of the will under which she inherited I was ignorant.

Somehow I had never thought of driving down to Somerset House and inspecting the document. It was an oversight, and I began to fear a very serious one.

"Look here, Mr. Slugg," I said, with a ghastly attempt at jocularly, "we'll discuss those provisions, if you please. They're the proper food for a wedding breakfast."

"You know nothing about the will after all, then?" enquired Mr. Slugg coldly. "I might have guessed it!"

"Of course I know nothing, except that under it my wife inherits a considerable fortune."

"On conditions," murmured Mr. Slugg gently.

"Conditions!" I echoed, shifting uneasily in my seat. "And, pray, what are they? Nothing extravagant, nothing unreasonable, I trust?"

"They seem to me to be reasonable enough; but then," he added with a sneer, "I'm not a Lympet."

"If they're reasonable, I'll comply with them," I said shortly. "I'm not a fool."

"I think I've a copy somewhere," observed Mr. Slugg, rummaging in his drawers. "My brother was a very peculiar man, Mr. Lympet. He had risen from nothing, and he was proud of it. He was also proud of his name, and rightly so, for it was—ay, and still is!—a power in the tallow-candle line. It was his chief regret that he had not a son to inherit his fame. It pained him to think that on his daughter's marriage the name of Slugg would no longer be associated with the fortune he had made, that it would soon be forgotten the money came from a Slugg, and that his grandchildren might pass their lives in ease, and yet be ignorant of the very source from which their portions came. All this, I say, pained him. He looked upon himself as the founder of a family——"

"Monstrous!" I ejaculated, "monstrous!"

"And he did not want his descendants to forget their obligations. His best plan would have been to leave his money to his daughter on condition she married her cousin, who some day will be head of the House he helped to found, but he did not want to fetter her choice. I think he was mistaken, but let that pass. We are considering what he actually did, not what he ought to have done. To be brief, after sundry legacies, he left his fortune to his daughter on these conditions: if she married, her husband was to take the name of Slugg, or the money passed to her next-of-kin, save an allowance of five hundred a year for life——"

"What!" I yelled, starting to my feet.

"Moreover," he continued, paying no attention to my outburst, "she cannot touch her capital. The full income is hers for life, but, had she died unmarried, it would have passed to our side of the family, as it will do should she die without issue. Of course, any children she may have will inherit the whole fortune at her death, but they must keep the name of Slugg."

"I don't believe it!" I stammered, sinking back into my chair.

"Here is the copy," he replied, handing it to me. "You'll find it all there, though possibly not in such plain English."

Alas! it was too true. Amidst all the tangle of verbiage one fact stood distinctly out: the husband of Belinda would have to adopt her name or forfeit her fortune. What was I to do? Abandon the name of Lympet which I loved, and assume the name of Slugg which I loathed? Impossible! Yet what was the alternative? Genteel poverty. My pride pulled one way, my prudence the other; and prudence won. I had my wife to think of. I could not rob her of her fortune and drag her down from affluence to indigence for a mere sentiment, however noble. For her sake I resolved to subdue my pride and sacrifice my name. To parody Gibbon, I sighed as a Lympet, I obeyed as a husband. "After all," I concluded, not knowing that I spoke aloud, "by the aid of a hyphen it may be made endurable. Lympet-Slugg! It is at least uncommon."

"If you look on the other page," broke in an unsympathetic voice, "you will see a clause which provides for any such attempt at evasion. In it the testator declares that he will have no tampering with the fine old Anglo-Saxon name of Slugg, that he will not have it linked to a hyphen, and converted into a hybrid compound. The plain old-fashioned name of Slugg must not be spoilt by any unnecessary additions. My brother loved his name, you see, sir, and, as I told you, was uncommonly proud of it."

"Confound his pride!" I cried, throwing down the will and stamping on it.

"Come, come," said Mr. Slugg, "you need not give way so. You are not compelled to take our name. Of course you mean to refuse! 'No one whose privilege it is to be called Lympet would like to be called anything else!'"

Had I been wavering, the man's gibes would have decided me. By accepting the name of Slugg, I kept his hands from the fortune for which they were itching; and this knowledge considerably lessened the pain my decision cost me.

"That will do," I said coldly. "I think there is nothing to detain us here longer. Let us go upstairs. No doubt you are anxious to congratulate your niece, Mrs.—Mrs. Slugg!"

And that is how I came to be called Slugg. Ah, if I had known the contents of that abominable will when I made my choice between Miss Merrick and Miss

Slugg, I would certainly have chosen Miss Merrick. It would have cost me twenty thousand pounds, but the name of Lympet was well worth the sacrifice. As it is, I have won a fortune, but I have got to go through life ticketed with the price I paid for it. Nor is that all. I have children, but I can take little interest in them, for they are not Lympets, but Sluggs. My father is much annoyed with me, and can hardly bring himself to recognise a Slugg as a member of the family; Cumbergroud chaffs me unmercifully, and my sisters call my wife "that creature," and compare me to Esau. But perhaps my greatest cross is the prosperity of the Slugg candle business, which has become a tremendous concern. The hated name flames on every hoarding, flaunts on the backs of novels and magazines, and has become familiar to every ear. And strangers and casual acquaintances will persist in mistaking me for a member of the firm! More than once I have overheard people describing me as, "Slugg, the candleman, you know," in perfectly audible "asides." Even my friends do not spare me, for they have bestowed on me a nickname which, recalling as it does all I have lost, costs me a pang every time I hear it. They call me the late Mr. Lympet.

A WITTY WOMAN.

THERE can be no doubt that Lady Mary Wortley Montagu is entitled to a foremost place among witty women. You may suggest that she was at times indelicate; you may credit all the malignant calumnies against her circulated by Horace Walpole, who naturally hated a woman as clever as himself, and whose wounded vanity made him an unscrupulous enemy; you may "aspere her parts of speech"; but you can't deny that she was witty. She began very early. She had not long been married when we find her writing to her husband—Edward Wortley Montagu, Esq.—with polished smartness and a pretty epigrammatical turn of phrase:

"If it were possible to restore liberty to your country, or limit the encroachment of the prerogative, by reducing yourself to a garret, I should be pleased to share so glorious a poverty with you; but, as the world is and will be, 'tis a sort of duty to be rich, that it may be in one's power to do good; riches being another word for

power, towards the obtaining of which the first necessary qualification is impudence, and—as Demosthenessaid of pronunciation, in oratory—the second is impudence, and the third, still impudence. . . The Ministry is like a play at Court; there's a little door to get in at, and a great crowd without, shoving and thrusting who shall be foremost; people who knock others with their elbows, disregard a little kick of the shins, and still thrust heartily forwards, are sure of a good place. Your modest man stands behind in the crowd, is shoved about by everybody, his clothes torn, almost squeezed to death, and sees a thousand get in before him that don't make so good a figure as himself."

Lady Mary was only twenty-six when she wrote with all this point and facility.

At a later date we find her describing with but a few graphic touches her experiences of a stormy passage across the Channel.

"It is hard to imagine oneself," she says, "in a scene of greater horror than on such an occasion, and yet—shall I own it to you?—though I was not at all willing to be drowned, I could not forbear being entertained at the double distress of a fellow-passenger. She was an English lady that I had met at Calais, who desired me to let her go over with me in my cabin. She had brought a fine point-head, which she was striving to conceal from the Custom House officer. When the wind grew high, and our little vessel cracked, she fell heartily to her prayers, and thought wholly of her soul. When it seemed to abate, she returned to the worldly care of her head-dress, and addressed herself to me: 'Dear madam, will you take care of this point? If it should be lost! Oh, Lord, we shall all be lost! Lord have mercy on my soul! Pray, madam, take care of this head-dress!' This easy transition from her soul to her head-dress, and the alternate agonies that both gave her, made it hard to determine which she thought of greatest value."

After a Continental tour, Lady Mary, in October, 1718, at the age of twenty-eight, took her place in London society as one of its fashionable leaders and most brilliant ornaments. Still in the ripe bloom of womanhood, she dazzled by her personal charms, and could fascinate by the magic of her smile or a glance from her beautiful eyes. Her accomplishments were various; her manners graceful, though assured, and free from the "gêne" that so often em-

barrasses the untravelled Englishwoman; and her conversation was charming in its wit and range and depth, for she had read much and seen much, and was gifted with a rare faculty of expression. That such a woman attracted a crowd of admirers is no more a wonder than that such a woman did not object to their admiration, even while she despised it.

Soon after her return, Lady Mary took up her residence at Twickenham, in the immediate neighbourhood of Pope, his villa, his garden, and his grotto. A frequent visitor was Lord Hervey, the wit and fine gentleman, whose gifts of intellect have almost been forgotten in the obloquy heaped upon him by the malice of the little satirist. So clever a man was necessarily drawn towards so clever a woman, and they became fast friends. Lord Hervey dying in the prime of manhood, after Lady Mary had settled abroad, his eldest son sealed up her letters and returned them with an assurance that he had not opened or read them. In reply she acknowledged his honourable conduct, adding that she could almost regret he had not glanced his eye over a correspondence which would have shown him what so young a man might, perhaps, be inclined to doubt—the possibility of a long and steadfast friendship being maintained, without any admixture of love, between two persons of different sexes. I do not know why this assertion should not be believed. The scandal levelled at Lady Mary in this case, as in other cases, originated in the inventions of her notorious enemies, Horace Walpole and Pope. That she wrote with a good deal of freedom in her letters, and permitted a good deal of freedom on the part of her correspondents, will not be construed as a proof of improper conduct by any person who, in the first place, has studied the idiosyncrasies of her character, and, in the second, has made himself acquainted with the license of language that in those days prevailed among the most virtuous gentlewomen. Conscious of her powers of wit and ridicule, she used them too profusely; sparing not her friend nor foe; converting friends into foes, and rendering foes more bitter; laughing at everybody and everything; and sowing enmities around her broadcast. While not defending her occasional coarseness and irreverence—there are things which it is not seemly to jest about or even to write about—I am persuaded she was innocent of all graver errors.

In the quarrel between Pope and Lady Mary, the former unquestionably carries off most of the blame and all the disgrace. The valetudinarian little poet was probably sincere in his passion for the accomplished beauty; was dazzled by her personal and intellectual graces into as strong an attachment as was possible to his selfish temper. This is also Leigh Hunt's opinion; but then such an attachment involves a severe condemnation on his conduct in forgetting, or pretending to forget, that she was a wife and a mother. She was wrong in permitting his addresses; but the truth is, she laughed at them. They pleased her natural woman's vanity, and at the same time gratified her sense of humour. It was certain from the first that they would not know each other long without quarrelling. The poet demanded an amount of flattery and submission which she was the last woman in the world to concede. I suspect that the poet found she was amusing herself with the extravagance of his devotion; but Lady Mary's own statement is, that at some inopportune moment when she least expected what young ladies call "a declaration," he made such passionate love to her that, in spite of her utmost endeavour to be angry and preserve her gravity, she broke out into a fit of immoderate laughter. Thenceforward wounded vanity made him her implacable enemy; and he spared no effort to send her name down to posterity besmirched with the filth of his scandal. In the heyday of his infatuation he had celebrated her under the name of Sappho with all the resources of his panegyric. Now he brought all the resources of his hatred to effect her degradation. His first attack was made in the third epistle of his "Moral Essays":

Rufa, whose eye quick glancing o'er the park,
Attracts each light gay meteor of a spark,
Agrees as ill with Rufa studying Locke,
As Sappho's diamonds with her dirty smock;
Or Sappho at her toilet's greasy task
With Sappho fragrant at an evening masque,
So morning insects that in muck begun
Shine, buzz, and fly-blow in the setting sun.

This was coarse, but coarser still was a couplet which he introduced into his "Imitations of Horace": so coarse that I dare not quote it—so coarse that Pope himself had the grace to feel ashamed, and stammered out a denial that it was intended to apply to Lady Mary.

About the same time our splenetic little poet spouted some of his poisonous ink on Lord Hervey, who retorted in certain contemptuous "Verses addressed to the Imitator of the First Satire of

the Second Book of Horace." These, which are more bitter than witty, are included in Lady Mary's works, though she always repudiated their authorship. They exhibit few traces of the vivacity of her style; but she may probably have inserted a couplet here and there. Pope replied in the splendidly venomous "Epistle to Arbuthnot," in which Lord Hervey's portrait is sketched under that of Sporus with a vitriolic intensity of hate. Lady Mary was not brought within the range of this attack, but Pope continued to gird at her in his letters and conversation until she left England in 1739.

This act of separation from her husband, and self-banishment from the circles where she had reigned supreme, set the tongues of hundred-headed Scandal wagging lustily. Yet it was a simple enough matter after all. Witty women do not as a rule make friends; witty women who are not only witty but fearless, and not only fearless but unconventional, do not make friends but multiply enemies; and I incline to believe that Lady Mary had rendered London society exceedingly uncomfortable for herself and others. Further, she was weary of the old scenes and the old faces; she was weary of fashionable life; and so she left it all. Her husband and herself had always lived upon friendly terms, but with a certain amount of detachment; and being some years older than his wife, he resolved on sticking to his home-comforts instead of following her erratic steps. They corresponded regularly, and of the value of his wife's letters he showed his conviction by the care he took of them.

There was really nothing more at the bottom of it all than this. The suggestion that the separation was at Mr. Montagu's instance, and was due to his disgust with her irregularities, is absolutely without a single corroborative fact; and would never have taken shape but for the firm conviction of a certain order of minds that a witty woman necessarily carries out the alliteration, and is also a wicked woman. "Rumours," said Mrs. Oliphant, "are poor things to hold up before us at a distance of a hundred and thirty years; and even Horace Walpole, even Pope, have nothing but vague irritation to vent against Lady Mary. And Mr. Wortley's letters, after his wife's departure, give us for the first time a certain friendliness for the heavy man, who is glad of her comfort in his composed way, and trusts her in

their common concerns, and cares for her health and well-being. The two would seem after their stormy beginning to have grown into a certain friendship with the years. Perhaps he meant to join her, as several of his letters imply; or perhaps he permitted her to believe that he meant to join her; or perhaps it was held vaguely possible, as a thing that might or might not be, indifferent to the world, not over interesting even to themselves."

So Lady Mary departed, and stayed on the Continent for two-and-twenty years; and all that time the witty woman wrote home to her husband, her daughter, and her friends the most charming letters—letters which are scarcely inferior to those of Madame de Sévigné, for if they are inferior in grace they surpass in vivacity—letters full of happy descriptions and shrewd reflections, the letters of a woman who has seen much and observed much, and knows how to convey to others the results of her experience with graphic force and lucidity.

I could quote many passages in justification of my styling her a witty woman, but I prefer to make an extract which will show her to have been, a century and a half ago, a strenuous advocate for the higher education of women.

"There is no part of the world where our sex is treated with so much contempt as in England. I do not complain of men for having engrossed the government; in excluding us from all degrees of power, they preserve us from many fatigues, many dangers, and, perhaps, many crimes. But I think it the highest injustice to be debarred the entertainment of my closet, and that the same studies which raise the character of a man should hurt that of a woman. We are educated in the grossest ignorance, and no art omitted to stifle our natural reason; if some few get above their nurses' instructions, our knowledge must rest concealed, and be as useless to the world as gold in the mine. It appears to me the strongest proof of a clear understanding in Longinus—in every light acknowledged one of the greatest men among the ancients—when I find him so far superior to vulgar prejudices, as to choose his two examples of fine writing from a Jew—at that time the most despised people upon earth—and a woman. Our modern wits would be so far from quoting, they would scarce own they had read the works of such contemptible creatures, though, perhaps, they would

condescend to steal from them, at the same time they declared they were below their notice."

MISS GARTH.

A STORY IN FIVE CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER I.

MISS GARTH of Boraston Hall was six-and-twenty years of age.

People had almost given up wondering why a woman, young, handsome, rich, and so entirely her own mistress, had not given Boraston Hall a master long ago. Only Jocelyn Garth herself could have told why she remained unmarried, but she was silent on the subject, and she was not a woman whom the impertinent dare question.

In person she was tall and very fair. Her figure was graceful and delicately rounded. Her eyes were very still, and grey, and tranquil, like the waters of a lake; and they were surmounted by eyebrows that were almost black, and fringed with deep lashes that lay dark against her delicate cheek.

She had no companion and no chaperon to keep her company in the old Hall in which she dwelt. She depended entirely for society on a small slip of a golden-haired child whom she had adopted years ago. The little girl, a perfect fairy in grace and prettiness, was the daughter of a cousin who had died abroad, and who had sent home the orphan to the tender care of Jocelyn Garth.

But although she cared for no other companionship but that of the child, she was by no means a hermit. She went to dances and dinners, and gave dances and dinners in return. None could call her unsociable, but many deemed her quiet and uninteresting. People sought eagerly for invitations to Boraston Hall nevertheless. Miss Garth was well known to be exclusive to fastidiousness, and to be asked to one of her dinners or balls stamped one with an aristocratic stamp at once.

Jocelyn was considered in all respects to be a most fortunate woman. She had a positively princely income, the most unexceptionable relations, and a charming old house to live in. Jocelyn kept up the old place in magnificent style. There were antique treasures in some of the rooms that money could not buy.

Every Christmas Jocelyn had a large house-party to which she invited her most intimate friends and relations. The in-

timate friends were few, and the unexceptionable relations were many. Jocelyn made a perfect hostess, and was equally gracious to all. She was never known to make a confidence. Her relations called her "unsympathetic." Their aristocratic breeding would not allow them to go further than that.

The time was drawing near for Jocelyn to assemble her house-party. She sat in her luxurious boudoir writing the usual notes to the usual people, with a troubled expression in her eyes that sometimes crept into them when she was alone.

There would be no refusals, she knew that; and the house-party would be almost precisely similar to every other house-party that she had given ever since she came of age. There would be her aunt, Lady Carstairs, to chaperon the party, together with a couple of Carstairs men and a couple of Carstairs girls. There would be four or five cousins of different sexes—more distant and a good deal poorer than the Carstairs cousins. There would be half-a-dozen people from lonely country houses thirty or forty miles away—and there would be Godfrey Wharton and his sister.

It was when writing her note to the last-named that the troubled look had stolen into Jocelyn Garth's eyes. They were the only people she really cared about amongst the many she had asked. They were also the only people she feared to see.

Jocelyn Garth was not a vain woman, but she had seen that in Godfrey Wharton's eyes once or twice that was absolutely unmistakable. She knew, just as well as if he had spoken the words, that he loved her. She had warded off, as women know how to ward off, an absolute declaration on his part. But the time was coming when she knew she could keep him at a distance no longer.

Five years ago, gossip had linked their names together. When Jocelyn attained her majority and entered into possession of vast estates, it was whispered that Miss Garth and the young Squire of Gratton Park would "make it up together." But as time went on and there was no sign of anything between the young people but friendship, gossip died away for lack of nourishment. It was undeniable that they would have made a fine couple.

The house-party began on the twenty-fourth of December and lasted over the New Year. Lady Carstairs, with two blooming daughters and two stalwart sons, was the first to arrive.

"Well, Jocelyn," she said, as she kissed her niece's cheek, "here we all are again as usual. Nothing has happened, I suppose? No exciting news to tell me?"

Lady Carstairs asked the same question each year, as a delicate insinuation to Jocelyn that it was high time she got engaged. Lady Carstairs hardly thought it was the thing for a young woman in Jocelyn's position to remain unmarried.

"I should have been very humiliated," she once remarked, "if I had reached the age of twenty-six without even being engaged. I had not a fiftieth part of Jocelyn's money, and I don't think I was so handsome. But I had 'go,' which Jocelyn has not, and it always takes with men."

She was piloted upstairs and shown her rooms by Jocelyn herself. There was a good deal of bustle and flying about as soon as she set foot in the house. For a week quiet old Boraston Hall would hardly know itself. Its dignified repose was only disturbed by such a flippant invasion once a year.

Lady Carstairs was languidly explaining why she had only brought one maid.

"At the last moment—the very last moment, my dear," she said, sinking into an arm-chair and loosening her wraps, "the girls' maid gave notice. Such impertinence! And all because I had forgotten that I had promised to let her go home at this particular time. As if this were not holiday enough! However, she has gone home for good now, and I am sure I hope she'll like it. But what are my poor girls to do, Jocelyn?"

"I will lend them Parker," said Jocelyn, smiling. "I hardly ever need her. She finds her life quite dull, and will be charmed to have the charge of two fashionable young ladies."

"So good of you," murmured Lady Carstairs, dismissing the subject comfortably at once. "I think I should like my tea up here, Jocelyn, please. I am quite worn out."

Jocelyn left the room to give her orders, and in a little while was joined by her two cousins. It was wonderful how short a time they had taken to get into elaborate tea-gowns and have their hair curled.

Jocelyn was sitting before a large log fire in the big hall. The rich oak panelling, covered with rare old china and flashing swords, gleamed, softly sombre, in the ruddy firelight. Jocelyn herself, in her white woollen gown with the silver belt, looked particularly fair and handsome against her dark surroundings.

"Tell us all about the people you have got," said Lucy Carstairs, as soon as she was comfortably settled with a cup of tea in her hand. "Is there anybody fresh?"

"I am afraid not," Jocelyn answered, smiling. "It is the same old set, Lucy."

"No one new at all?"

"Not one. We are slow at growing new aborigines, you know. But I can promise you a few exciting young men at the ball. I asked Lady Ellis to bring any one she chose, and she always has a train of eligibles on hand."

"Really, Jocelyn," said Rose Carstairs, "you sometimes talk as if you were a hundred, and quite past all the things that other people care about. You stand outside them, as it were."

Jocelyn did not answer. She had turned to meet Harry and Edgar, who were lounging down the stairs in velvet smoking-coats.

An hour later and the house was full. There was a great rushing about in the corridors, and calling for maids, and demanding hot water. A great laughing and questioning as to the rooms which they were to have. Merry congratulations that they had met again. A mingling of feminine voices and deep basses; a general frolicsomeness and bustle. The old house had wakened up.

Jocelyn Garth stood in the great hall, greeting with a smile on her lips the last arrival—Godfrey Wharton.

"You are late!" she said.

"I am so sorry, but I couldn't manage to come over with Kitty. You dine at eight, don't you?"

"Yes; and it is only twenty minutes to, now! We must hurry."

She mounted the stairs lightly and left him standing there with words of unspoken admiration on his lips. She always avoided being alone with him for even five minutes together. He bit his lip as he recognised that the old will-o'-the-wisp chase was to begin once more.

"But this time she shall give me an answer," he said to himself, as he followed her slowly up the stairs.

Dinner was a very merry affair that night. So many of the guests had not met since this time last year. There was so much to talk over; so many "do you remember?" interspersed with glances more or less tender; so many promising flirtations taken up again at the point at which they had been broken off twelve months ago.

Jocelyn sat at the head of the table in

white and diamonds. Lady Carstairs sat at Jocelyn's left hand, and made comments on the guests in a confidential tone.

"Nobody fresh, I see, Jocelyn? Is everybody really here?"

"Every single soul, aunt. I wish I could have collected a few new people, but there were none to collect."

"Hum—ha!" said Lady Carstairs, with her eyeglass to her eye. "Daisy Carruthers seems to have gone off a good deal since last year. I was rather afraid Edgar would take to her. No money, I believe?"

"No money; only birth, Aunt Grace," said Jocelyn in her quiet voice.

Lady Carstairs shot a quick glance at her niece. She had an idea that sometimes Jocelyn was a little sarcastic, and she did not like sarcastic women.

"Birth is all very well," she replied with dignity; "but money is absolutely necessary, nowadays. Young Wharton has grown very coarse-looking," she added, returning to her scrutiny of the guests.

She had a fancy that Jocelyn and Godfrey Wharton liked each other more than was wise. She wanted Jocelyn to marry her own son Edgar.

"Has he?" said Jocelyn, with her most imperturbable expression. "I had not observed it."

"You are so used to him, my dear. I have not seen him for a year."

Jocelyn let the subject drop. She never argued and waxed hot in discussion—which was perhaps one of the reasons why she was deemed unsympathetic.

"Those Bletherton girls dress worse than ever," said Lady Carstairs, going on with her survey. "Couldn't you hint to the fat one, Jocelyn, that magenta velvet looks awful against that yellow skin of hers? Any one can see she has been in India."

"Perhaps she doesn't know she has a yellow skin. It would be a pity to enlighten her."

"Well, well—dear me, Jocelyn, how aged Colonel Tredarth is! Poor old man! It is quite pitiable to see him."

"He has only left off dyeing his hair, aunt. That is really the only difference."

"My dear, how cynical you are! I should not like to say that about one of my relations," said Lady Carstairs with virtuous indignation, and a consciousness that her own hair was not entirely innocent of liquid assistance. "I believe the poor creature's hair has grown white from grief. He never recovered his son's going off in that extraordinary way."

"That was ten years ago."

"Sorrow tells slowly on some people," said Lady Carstairs with a sigh. "It was years before I realised what a blow poor John's death was to me."

"John" was her husband.

Jocelyn was silent again. She had none of the fluent stock remarks people usually utter on such occasions. She now turned her attention to her right-hand neighbour—an elderly bachelor, also a cousin, who had taken her in to dinner.

"I hope you have not forgotten how to skate, Cousin Arthur?" she remarked. "We are going to have all sorts of festivities on the ice, and I shall need you to look after me."

"You ought to have a younger man to look after you," said the lean cousin. "I expect I shall be quite out of the running. You forget that I am a fossil, Jocelyn."

Perhaps she did not forget this fact oftener than he did himself. At fifty-five he still considered himself a gay young boy.

"And there is the ball, too," continued Jocelyn, "and a dinner-party, and my New Year's Eve ghostly éance. I shall expect you to be at the front in everything."

"I will obey any commands from lips so fair," said the elderly cousin, with clumsy gallantry.

Jocelyn gave the signal to rise at that moment, and the ladies swept from the room, the magenta velvet in close juxtaposition to an exquisite yellow gown from Worth. Lady Carstairs declared afterwards that it made her very bones ache to look at them.

There was playing and singing after dinner, and by-and-by, when the men came in, a good deal of mild flirtation. Lady Carstairs drew Jocelyn's attention to the fact that her cousin Edgar was the finest man in the room.

Miss Garth gave a glance in the direction of the six feet of masculine beauty which was now engaged in absently gazing at its patent-leather toes.

"Very good-looking," she said briefly.

"He is considered the handsomest man about town," said Lady Carstairs, a little ruffled at Jocelyn's indifference.

"Is he? That is very nice."

Jocelyn spoke as though she were thinking of something else. Lady Carstairs

asked her sharply what she was watching the door like that for?

She coloured a little for the first time.

"I was wondering why Aveline did not come in. I told her she might stop up to see you all. Ah, here she is!"

The door opened and a dainty little figure, all white muslin and blue ribbons and golden hair, came in. She went straight to Jocelyn and nestled up to her. Miss Garth kissed the little face with a depth, almost a passion, of tenderness.

"You are as fond of that child as ever," remarked Lady Carstairs disapprovingly, as she gave a cold peck at the rose-flushed cheeks. "And spoil her more, no doubt. She should never have been allowed to sit up till this time."

"She would not have slept if I had put her to bed," said Jocelyn apologetically.

Lady Carstairs grunted—if such a plebeian expression may be used of such an aristocratic personage.

"You will repent pampering her like this. Some day she will have to get her own living."

She was watching little Aveline's progress round the room with a smile on her face. All the men were petting and teasing her, and all the ladies were lavishing endearing epithets upon her.

But Aveline was a little person of decision and discrimination. She put aside with a firm hand the dazzling attentions that were offered her, and made straight for Godfrey Wharton, who was the only person in the room who had taken no notice of her.

She climbed up into his arms and laid her head on his shoulder, with a nestling gesture that was almost the same as she used to Jocelyn.

Godfrey Wharton bent his head and kissed her softly. Above the little golden head, across the whole length of the room, his eyes met Jocelyn Garth's.

The look in itself was a caress. She felt as though, in the presence of all, he had kissed her lips instead of the child's.

She blushed crimson, and hastily turned away her head. Lady Carstairs, who had succeeded in planting Edgar by his cousin's side, put down the blush to the admiring glance that the young man had given her.

And she went to bed in high good-humour.

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